



## Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Position Description

**Title:** Welcome Center Host

**Purpose:** Welcome Center hosts are the public's first contact upon entering the Welcome Center (WC) at Midewin. They provide a friendly welcome and offer information about Midewin's history, mission and recreation opportunities.

**Duties and Responsibilities:** WC hosts greet visitors, answer questions and provide orientation to the general area. This also includes handing out literature, trail maps and program schedules and restocking them when they get low. Light administrative work such as answering phones, transferring calls and collecting program RSVPs may also be part of the host's duties. In addition, WC hosts assist with the Midewin Interpretive Association (MidIA) gift shop by handling merchandise sales. During hunting season, hosts may need to issue permits to hunters.

**Department and Location:** Under the direction of the Environmental Education Specialist, volunteer WC hosts are part of Midewin's Public Services department and work within Midewin's Welcome Center to provide services to the general public. The Welcome Center is located within the Supervisor's Office complex, which is also called the headquarters.

**Qualifications:** WC hosts must be friendly, have good communication skills and enjoy talking with people. Hosts must have the ability to work cooperatively with a variety of visitors, staff and other volunteers. It is most helpful to be able to read and retain quite a bit of information about a variety of topics in order to be a good resource for visitors. During busy hours, it is necessary to be friendly and concise with visitors in order to accommodate many people that may be waiting for service. It will be necessary to learn the cash register and credit card transaction program. Hosts are responsible for their own transportation to and from Midewin. A second host is required to be scheduled for safety and security reasons, which may be a paid staff member or another volunteer.

**Time Commitment:** A multiple year commitment is preferred because of the level of training involved and also hosts gain most of their experience gradually over time. Scheduled shifts are from 8am-4:30pm and can be any day Monday-Saturday. The Welcome Center is closed on Saturdays from November-March. Regularly scheduled commitments of one day per month up to one day per week are most helpful. Unless there is an emergency, we need 48 hour notice for a schedule cancellation in order for us to make other arrangements.

**Training:** All hosts are required to complete an in-house orientation that will cover requirements, duties, safety, training materials, etc. New hosts will be partnered with an experienced host until there is a level of trust and comfort reached between the new host and the education specialist or trainer. Additional responsibilities could become applicable or available to this position in the future that might require additional training and/or certification. These additional responsibilities will be determined by the program managers and offered to selected volunteers.

This document has some good introductory information about Midewin's history and mission and also has links to additional resources on the last page. [http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5417390.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5417390.pdf)

**Working Conditions/Physical Effort:** *Welcome Center Hosts are covered by the Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) while performing duties described by this position description during the season(s) listed or scheduled shifts.* Hosts must read, sign and consent to the U.S. Forest Service Job Hazard Analysis, which includes emergency plans, safety requirements and recommended best practices. This is an indoor position in a temperature controlled building that requires sitting or standing for most of the shift. Midewin facilities are handicap accessible. For short breaks or lunch there is a break room and a nice path around the building and headquarters.

**Benefits:** Hosts play a critical role in delivering Midewin's message to the public. There are abundant opportunities and resources for hosts to learn about Midewin inside and out. It is common to learn a lot about this area from the visitors too. Midewin volunteers receive ongoing recognition from their supervisor's and other staff. Volunteers that contribute three or more individual volunteer visits in the fiscal year will receive an invitation to an annual volunteer recognition banquet in November. Midewin's volunteer staff receives the bimonthly Prairie Telegraph. Volunteers may be featured in the telegraph, newspaper articles and/or U.S. Forest Service success stories. Awards can be received for outstanding, innovative and/or long term, core volunteers.